

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00

EB-07 INR-07 NSAE-00 FAA-00 PM-03 H-02 L-02 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 OMB-01 IO-10

ACDA-05 /084 W

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P 220700Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9295

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2492/1

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, PK

SUBJECT: INDO-PAK RELATIONS

REF: A. NEW DELHI 3811

B. ISLAMABAD 2361

C. STATE 58326

D. STATE 58327

SUMMARY: PAK MFA OFFICER DENIED INDIAN ALLEGATION THAT GOP HAS SHARPLY INCREASED ITS ANTI-INDIAN PROPAGANDA OUTPUT, STATED IT IS STILL AWAITING GOI REPLY TO ITS PROPOSAL TO HOLD CIVIL AIR TALKS IN NEW DELHI MARCH 28-30, AND EXPRESSED STRONG HOPE THAT IF INDIANS DO FIND IT NECESSARY TO HOLD THESE TALKS LATER THEIR DECISION WOULD STEM FROM GOI FOREIGN SECRETARY'S SCHEDULING PROBLEMS RATHER THAN FROM CONCERN ON INDIANS' PART ABOUT SIGNIFICANCE OF ALLEGED STEP-UP IN PROPAGANDA. HE REAFFIRMED GOP COMMITMENT TO NORMALIZATION PROCESS AND AGREED THAT THE HOLDING OF SUCCESSFUL CIVIL AIR TALKS WOULD BE WIDELY REGARDED AS THE CLEAREST DEMONSTRATION ON THE PART OF BOTH THE GOI AND THE GOP OF THIS CON-
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TINUING SIMLA COMMITMENT. END SUMMARY:

1. FOLLOWING RECEIPT OF REF A, POL COUNSELOR CALLED ON DIRECTOR GENERAL HAYAT MAHDI AT MFA MARCH 21 TO GET GOP READING OF PRESENT PROSPECTS IN INDO-PAK RELATIONS. MEHDI HAS JUST TAKEN OVER RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOUTH ASIAN AFFAIRS FROM ABDUL SATTAR, WHO HAS BEEN SHIFTED TO UNITED NATIONS MATTERS PENDING HIS REASSIGNMENT TO AN AMBASSADORIAL POSITION.

2. MEHDI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE GOI HAD EXPRESSED CONCERN TO THE PAKS OVER WHAT IT ALLEGED WAS A SHARP INCREASE IN PAKISTAN PROPAGANDA OUTPUT. HE SAID HE WAS NOW WORKING HIS WAY THROUGH THE MATERIAL SENT TO MFA BY THE INDIANS, AND WAS PERSUADED THAT WITH ONE UNSPECIFIED EXCEPTION (FOR WHICH HE SAID THE RESPONSIBLE OFFICER, ALSO UNNAMED, HAD BEEN SACKED), ALL OF THE ALLEGEDLY OFFENSIVE ITEMS WERE MERELY REITERATIONS OF LONG-STANDING GOP POSITION ON KASHMIR.

3. MEHDI ALSO CONFIRMED GOP UNHAPPINESS WITH AN ALLEGED RECENT STEPPING UP IN TEMPO OF GOI PROPAGANDA ON THE U.S. ARMS POLICY ISSUE AND KASHMIR. HE SAID THAT PAKS HAD BEEN GLAD TO NOTE THAT THIS HAD PEAKED JUST BEFORE U.S. DECISION WAS ANNOUNCED. HE NOTED THAT SOME STATEMENTS OF INDIAN LEADERS FOLLOWING ANNOUNCEMENT HAD BEEN MODERATE AND HELPFUL, AND CALLED SPECIFIC FAVORABLE ATTENTION TO CHAVAN'S STATEMENT TO PARLIAMENT ON THE SUBJECT.

4. ASKED ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR THE CIVIL AIR TALKS, MAHDI STATED THAT GOP WAS STILL AWAITING THE INDIAN REPLY TO ITS PROPOSAL TO HOLD THESE TALKS IN NEW DELHI MARCH 28-30. (CORRECTING INFORMATION WE RECEIVED FROM MFA LEGAL ADVISER CHAUDHARY, REF B, MEHDI NOTED THAT GIVEN EARLIER GOI INTEREST IN RESUMING THE CIVIL AIR TALKS PAKS HAD NOT CONSIDERED IT NECESSARY TO HAVE A FAVORABLE RESPONSE FROM THE INDIANS TO THE PROPOSAL FOR NEGOTIATIONS MADE IN THE BHUTTO/GANDHI LETTER AND HAD FOLLOWED THIS UP THEMSELVES WITH THE DATE SUGGESTION.) HE SAID THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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ABDUL SATTAR HAD TRIED UNSUCCESSFULLY TO CONTACT INDIAN MEA JOINT SECRETARY CHIB ON THE DELHI-ISLAMABAD HOT LINE MARCH 20 FOR A READING. HE WAS AWARE THAT THE INDIANS MIGHT HAVE PROBLEMS WITH THE PAK-SUGGESTED DATES BECAUSE OF THE ABSENCE IN HAVANA OF INDIAN FOREIGN SECRETARY KEWAL SINGH, AND SAID THAT THE PAKS WOULD BE PREPARED TO SEND THEIR DELEGATION LATER IF THE INDIANS FOUND THAT MORE CONVENIENT.

HE EXPRESSED THE STRONG HOPE THAT IF THE INDIANS DID
INDEED FIND IT NECESSARY TO HOLD THE TALKS LATER
THEIR DECISION WOULD STEM FROM KEWAL SINGH'S SCHEDULING
PROBLEMS RATHER THAN FROM CONCERN ON THE GOI'S PART
ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INDIAN-ALLEGED STEP-UP
IN THE PROPAGANDA. HE CONCLUDED THIS PORTION OF THE
CONVERSATION BY NOTING, IN OUR OPINION QUITE SENSIBLY,
THAT IF THE INDIANS WERE REALLY TROUBLED BY PAK
PROPAGANDA THAT WAS EVEN MORE REASON FOR THEM TO AGREE
TO EARLY TALKS AT WHICH MATTERS COULD BE SORTED OUT.

5. MEHDI SAID THAT THE GOP DELEGATION, WHICH WOULD
BE HEADED BY FOREIGN SECRETARY AGHA SHAHI, WOULD BE
PREPARED TO DISCUSS A VARIETY OF MATTERS WITH THE
INDIANS IN NEW DELHI, THOUGH PRIMARY FOCUS WOULD OF
COURSE BE ON CIVIL AIR ISSUES. ON THE SALAL DAM

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9296

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ISLAMABAD 2492/2

MATTER, HE STATED THAT THE GOP POSITION DIFFERED
FROM THE INDIAN IN THAT THE PAKS BELIEVED THAT THE
CONTROVERSY SHOULD BE DEALT WITH, AT LEAST INITIALLY,
AT THE TECHNICAL LEVEL (HE MENTIONED THAT THE
INDIAN AND PAK COMMISSIONERS HAD NOT YET MET TO
CONSIDER THE PROBLEM), WHILE THE GOI WANTED TO GO
AT ONCE TO THE POLITICAL LEVEL. THE PAKS WERE PRE-

PARED TO GO THAT ROUTE, PROBABLY IN A FOREIGN SECRETARIES' MEETING, ONLY WHEN THE POSSIBILITIES OF A SETTLEMENT AT THE TECHNICAL LEVEL WERE EXHAUSTED. ASKED ABOUT PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO'S PUBLIC CALL FOR TALKS WITH THE INDIANS ON KASHMIR, MEHDI SAID THE GOI HAD MADE NO RESPONSE. HE INDICATED THAT HE DID NOT EXPECT ONE.

6. THROUGHOUT THE DISCUSSION MEHDI MAINTAINED A LOW KEY APPROACH, AND CONVEYED THE IMPRESSION THAT THE GOP SINCERELY WISHED TO PROCEED WITH THE NORMALIZATION PROCESS. HE TOOK THE OCCASION TO REITERATE THE POINTS MADE BY AMBASSADOR YAQUB IN HIS MARCH 14 CONVERSATION WITH ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY SOBER ON THE GOP'S COMMITMENT TO NORMALIZATION AND ITS REGRET OVER THE TIKKA KHAN INTERVIEW ON ARMS. CONFIDENTIAL

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(REFS C & D). HE AGREED WITH THE POL COUNSELOR'S ASSESSMENT THAT THE HOLDING OF SUCCESSFUL CIVIL AIR TALKS WOULD BE WIDELY REGARDED AS THE CLEAREST DEMONSTRATION ON THE PART OF BOTH THE GOI AND THE GOP OF THIS COMMITMENT TO THE SIMLA PROCESS AND ASSERTED THAT THE GOP VERY MUCH WANTED THE TALKS TO SECCEED. BYROADE

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